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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 28 (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) A mortarboard configured for operative use by masons and brick layers at a construction site, comprising;

a. a generally rectangular sheet material having an outermost thickness of at least about 0.5 inches and defining a broad continuous ~~substantially flat~~ upper working surface, wherein upper working surface is slightly contoured in continuous dished-out manner from each of the sides of said upper working surface across substantially the extent of said upper working surface;

b. said upper working surface being sized and configured to retainably hold an operative quantity of cementitious mortar to be worked by an operator such as by mixing with a trowel or shovel, and being impervious to retain moisture in the mortar; and

c. said sheet of material defining a cut-out handle portion formed entirely through said sheet material adjacent one edge of said material and sized to accept an adult person's hand or fork-lift tine to facilitate carrying of said mortarboard in a generally vertical manner when not in operative use.

30. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said impervious upper working surface comprises polymer material.

31. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said sheet material comprises polymer material.

32. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said outermost thickness of said sheet material is between about 0.5 to 1 inch.

33. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the board-like sheet of material has a width dimension measured between first and second opposed edges and a height dimension measured between third and fourth opposed edges, wherein said width and height dimensions are greater or equal to about 24 inches.

34. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said cut-out handle portion has a width of greater or equal to about 6 inches.

35. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the weight of the mortarboard is about 5 pounds.

36. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, further including a plurality of support ribs integrally formed with said sheet material, configured and arranged to provide structural support for said upper working surface.

37. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, further including raised peripheral lip portions along at least three sides of said upper working surface.

38. (Currently amended) The mortarboard of claim 37, wherein said raised peripheral lip portions ~~extent~~ extend less than about 0.375 inches above the upper working surface.

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the radius of curvature of the dished-out contour of said working surface is larger than the largest width or height dimension of said working surface.

41. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein a lowermost portion of the dished-out upper working surface is recessed less than about 0.5 inches from an uppermost portion of the upper working surface.

42. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the material is configured so that a front and rear surface of the material will nest together with other mortarboards of like construction, when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.

43. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said sheet material is of a strength to resist breaking or damage to said working surface when struck by construction tools such as hammers.

44. (Currently amended) A strong, lightweight mortarboard configured for operable use by masons and brick layers at a construction site, comprising:

a. a board-like sheet material having an outermost thickness of at least about 0.5 inches and defining a continuous smooth solid broad upper working surface extending generally across the entire width of said sheet material between opposed side edges thereof;

b. said upper working surface being sized and configured to retainably hold an operative quantity of cementitious mortar to be worked by an operator, such as by mixing with a trowel or shovel, and being impervious to retain moisture in the mortar; and

c. said sheet material being slightly contoured across said upper working surface in dished-out manner from each of the sides of said upper working surface to form a single continuous accurate contour across the working surface;

d. whereby an operator can work mortar on said mortarboard by moving a trowel or shovel in a sweeping motion without engaging any irregularities across the mortarboard that

would interfere with continuous movement of said shovel or trowel during the mortar working operation.

45. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said upper working surface comprising polymer material.

46. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said sheet material comprises polymer material.

47. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said outermost thickness of said sheet material is between about 0.5 to 1 inch.

48. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, further including a carrying handle for carrying the mortarboard in generally vertical manner when not in operative use.

49. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 48, wherein said carrying handle comprises a cut-out portion defined by said sheet material extending entirely through said sheet material.

50. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 48, wherein said carrying handle defines an aperture sized and configured to operatively accept a person's hand or a tine of a fork-lift therethrough.

51. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, further including a plurality of support ribs integrally formed with said sheet material, configured and arranged to provide support for said upper working surface in a manner so as to not interfere with the smooth continuous nature of said working surface.

52. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein a lowermost portion of said dish-shaped working surface is recessed less than about 0.5 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

53. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 52, wherein a lowermost portion of said dished-out working surface is recessed less than about 0.375 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

54. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 53, wherein a lowermost portion of said dished-out working surface is recessed less than about 0.25 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

55. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the contour of said upper working surface has a single radius of curvature about a point located generally above a central portion of the working surface.

56. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 55, wherein the radius of curvature is larger than the largest width or diameter dimension of said working surface.

57. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the upper working surface has a width dimension greater or equal to about 24 inches.

58. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the mortarboard further defines a bottom surface opposite of said working surface, arranged and configured to operatively accommodate a support stand for the mortarboard.

59. (Previously presented) A mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the material is configured so that a front and a rear surface of the material will nest together with other mortarboards of like construction when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.

60. (Previously presented) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said sheet material is of a strength to resist breaking or damage to said working surface when struck by construction tools such as hammers.

Claims 61-64 (Cancelled)

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Support For Amendment:

Independent claim 29 is amended to include the features of cancelled claim 39 characterizing the upper working surface as slightly contoured in continuous dished-out manner across the extent of the working surface. In addition, independent claims 29 and 44 are amended to more clearly reflect that the dished-out working surface has a contour extending from the sides of the working surface as shown in Figure 1 where the circular lines are contour lines showing the dished out surface. Furthermore, independent claims 29 and 44 are amended to characterize the contour in continuous dished-out manner as from each of the sides of the working surface as shown by the contour lines in Figures 1. The continuously contoured or dished-out characterization of the upper working surface is described by the specification at, for example, page 7, line 13 through page 8, line 21..

Claim 8 is amended to correct a typographical error.

The outstanding Office Action includes a restriction requirement. In view of the cancellation of claims 61-64, it is understood that the restriction requirement has been rendered moot. The Applicant reserves the right to pursue cancelled claims 61-64 in a divisional patent application.

No new matter is introduced by this amendment, and entry thereof is requested. Upon entry, claims 29-38 and 40-60 are active in this application.